

**Comments on the proposed designation of a single neotype for *Hemibagrus nemurus* (Valenciennes, 1840) (Osteichthyes, Siluriformes) and *H. sieboldii* (Bleeker, 1846), and of the lectotype of *H. planiceps* (Valenciennes, 1840) as a neotype for *H. flavus* (Bleeker, 1846)**

(Case 3061; see BZN 56: 34–41)

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H.H. Ng et al. state in their application (see BZN 56: 39, para. 16) that only two species of *Hemibagrus* are known from Java: (a) *H. planiceps* (Valenciennes, 1840) = *anisurus* (Valenciennes, 1840) = *flavus* (Bleeker, 1846), and (b) *H. nemurus* (Valenciennes, 1840) = *sieboldii* (Bleeker, 1846). The two taxonomic species are clearly distinguishable; the identities and synonymies of all five nominal species from Java were stated by Bleeker himself in 1858 and have never been disputed since, and they are not doubted now. The 'possibilities' (p. 37, para. 9 and p. 39, para. 17) that other species may have occurred in Java in the first half of the 19th-century are immaterial, since the speculations are based on neither specimens nor descriptions. The fact that other *Hemibagrus* species occur outside Java and that their taxonomy is difficult has no relevance to the names discussed, since readily identifiable material exists of both the Javanese species.

It is obvious that the 'exceptional circumstances' required by Article 75 of the Code to justify neotype designation are absent in this case, and that there is no need for the Commission to set aside the original types.

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The application by Ng et al. contains some errors and omissions which result in wrong conclusions regarding Bleeker specimens; however, these errors do not greatly affect the situation.

As a general introductory point, I should like to mention that when the former Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie (RMNH) and the Rijksmuseum voor Geologie en Mineralogie (RGM) were merged in 1989 to form the Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum (NNM) it was decided that the acronyms for the biological and geological collections would remain unchanged. Thus all the fish specimens are denoted by the prefix RMNH, not by NNM as in the application.

According to Ng et al. (BZN 56: 35, para. 2) '*Bagrus* [now *Hemibagrus*] *flavus* was described from an unspecified number of specimens of unstated size from somewhere in Java'. *B. flavus* was described by Bleeker (1846) in a paper entitled 'Overzicht der Siluroïeden, welke te Batavia voorkomen' [Review of Siluroïdes occurring in Batavia]; in a previous paper (1844, p. 511) he stated that Silurids could be bought every day in the markets of Batavia (now Jakarta), and it seems likely that his bagrid specimens came from the area of Batavia itself rather than from 'somewhere in Java'. In 1858 Bleeker stated that the 21 specimens of *Bagrus planiceps* he then had (see below) came

from three rivers, one of them being the Tjiliwong which runs through Batavia. In that paper Bleeker stated (p. 155) [in my translation] '*Bagrus planiceps* CV. and *Bagrus anisurus* CV. very probably are the same species, differing only by variations of little importance, which can be considered as individual and ontogenetic variation. To this species also belongs *Bagrus flavus*, which I described more than ten years ago on the basis of a juvenile female'.

The last remark makes it clear that *B. flavus* was based on a single holotype specimen (which cannot now be identified), probably from Batavia, and that references to 'a syntype' (Fricke, 1991) or 'an unspecified number of specimens' (Ng et al.) are in error. After the original description in 1846 *B. flavus* was not mentioned by Bleeker until the 1858 paper, and it seems likely that he soon doubted the validity of his own name. *B. flavus* had been distinguished by the number of branchiostegal rays, but the specimen fitted in the ontogenetic series of *B. planiceps*.

With regard to the number of Bleeker specimens of *B. planiceps*, Ng et al. comment on the discrepancy between the number (21) reported by Bleeker in his Atlas (1862, p. 56) and the number now in the NNM and other museums. However, the Atlas is only a slightly changed version of the 1858 paper, and the number actually referred to the situation in 1858; after that time Bleeker received specimens from Primal in Sumatra and Montrado in Borneo (Bleeker, 1860a, p. 46; 1860b, p. 18), but these localities were not included in the section 'Habit.' in the 1862 Atlas.

Unlike the situation with *B. flavus*, Bleeker's other papers add nothing on *B. sieboldii*; after the description in 1846 Bleeker did not mention his name again until in 1858 (p. 151) he synonymized it with *B. nemurus* Valenciennes, 1840. After that time Bleeker received further specimens of *B. nemurus* from both Java and Borneo.

#### Additional references

- Bleeker, P.** 1860a. Achtste Bijdrage tot de kennis der Vischfauna van Sumatra. (Visschen van Benkoelen, Priaman, Tandjong, Palembang en Djambi). *Acta Societatis Regiae Scientiarum Indo-Neerlandicae*, vol. 8. 88 pp.
- Bleeker, P.** 1860b. Dertiende Bijdrage tot de kennis der Vischfauna van Borneo. *Acta Societatis Regiae Scientiarum Indo-Neerlandicae*, vol. 8. 64 pp.